

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TAIPEI 003294

SIPDIS

STATE PASS AIT/W

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/21/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: LY ELECTION PREVIEW: SOUTH CENTRAL TAIWAN

REF: TAIPEI 03231

Classified By: AIT Deputy Director David J. Keegan, Reason: 1.4 (B/D)

1. (C) Summary: Yunlin is shaping up to be a battleground county in the December legislative elections. With eighteen candidates vying for six seats, both Pan-Blue and Pan-Green have nominated aggressively in the hopes of gaining territory. Furthermore, KMT County Magistrate Chang Jung-Wei's disappearance after being implicated in a bribery scandal promises to become a key issue in the election. It is still too early to predict, but the Pan-Green camp seems more likely to gain an extra seat. Nantou County, by contrast, is more predictable. Although there are eleven candidates running for four seats, the Pan-Blue has gone on the defensive, with the KMT and People First Party (PFP) nominating just one candidate each. The KMT incumbent is a shoe-in and the PFP candidate should have a better than even chance. The main question in Nantou seems to be whether the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) will take both remaining seats or split them with the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU). End Summary.

Yunlin County: A Battleground

2. (C) Yunlin County (pop. 738,158) has six Legislative Yuan (LY) seats up for election in December. A total of eighteen candidates registered by the October 12 deadline, but only eight or nine are "serious contenders," according to Yunlin County Government Information Bureau Director Hung Po-Lin. In the last election three seats went to Pan-Blue candidates, two to Pan-Green, and one to an independent who later joined the DPP. Both sides have nominated four candidates, hoping to gain territory in the LY, but a large number of maverick and independent candidates may complicate the election.

DPP: A Team of Three

3. (C) The DPP has nominated three candidates. Lin Kuo-Hua, an incumbent, has a strong base of support and is widely considered a safe bet for reelection. The other two candidates, former National Assembly member Lin Shu-Shan and Yunlin County Council member Chen Hsien-Chung do not enjoy the same level of name recognition. Chen is considered by many observers to be a particularly weak candidate. (Note: The DPP's other incumbent, Su Chih-Fen decided not to run for reelection, reportedly because she intends to run for County Magistrate next year. End note.) The DPP's strategy therefore is to have the three campaign as a team, explained DPP Yunlin County Chairman Wang Kao-Hsing, so that Lin Kuo-Hua can lend his support to the others. Campaign posters display the three candidates standing together with Lin Kuo-Hua prominently featured in the middle. Furthermore, the DPP plans to conduct periodic internal polls to determine which candidates the campaign should focus on. If necessary, they will implement a "peipiao" strategy in the final days of the campaign, in which the DPP vote will be split among the candidates by directing voters, based on their birthday or the last digit of their national ID number, to vote for particular candidates.

TSU: The Activist Councilwoman

SIPDIS

4. (C) The TSU has nominated one candidate, Yunlin County Council member Yin Ling-Ying. She enjoys a reputation as an environmental activist, having successfully stopped a 1999 land development project that would have destroyed the habitat of an endangered bird species. Most recently, she exposed a major bribery scandal involving the County Magistrate, Chang Jung-Wei (Reftel). Yin is enjoying a boost in popularity because of the attention she has received in the Chang scandal. However, local attorney Lee Chien-Chung, who is also the brother of one of Yin's TSU colleagues on the County Council, said he worries that her support is too dependent on the scandal. Should the scandal fade from memory, her voters might instead support one of the better-known independent candidates, such as Kao Chin-Lang of the Taiwan Independence Party (TAIP). Yunlin County Information Bureau Director Hung Po-Lin, a Chang appointee,

was even more skeptical of her chances, saying that her support is "in the air." He further suggested that her activism has gone too far, and that by accusing reporters of accepting bribes to underreport government corruption, she has alienated her most important ally: the press. DPP Deputy SecGen Lee Ying-yuan, a Yunlin native, offered a completely different assessment. Yin, he said, "is a shoe-in."

KMT: Three Candidates, Four Mavericks

15. (C) The KMT has nominated three candidates: Hsu Shu-Po, an incumbent; Hou Hui-Hsien, who previously served as a legislator from 1999-2001, but lost her reelection campaign in 2001; and Chang Shuo-wen, secretary to fugitive Magistrate Chang Jung-Wei. The biggest threat to their chances comes from several other candidates who have decided to run independently after failing to secure KMT nominations. Among these is an incumbent, Tseng Tsai Mei-Tso, who received the most KMT votes in the last election. KMT Yunlin County Chairman Cheng Ching-Chen claimed she wasn't nominated because she lost a primary election within the party. However, local attorney Lee said she might have been dropped because her brother is a well-known gangster and the KMT fears another scandal. Another former KMT lawmaker with gangster ties, Lin Ming-Yi, is running under the Nonpartisan Solidarity Union (NSU) banner. The fugitive Magistrate's sister, Chang Li-Shan, is also running, and many predict she could collect the sympathy vote from those who believe her brother's plight is the result of a DPP vendetta. Former KMT legislator Liao Fu-Pen, also known as "Red Envelope" (Hong-Bao) Pen because of his flagrant vote-buying, is also running. KMT Chairman Cheng was dismissive of these mavericks, saying that without access to the KMT's extensive network of local campaign offices they don't stand a chance against his nominees. Local attorney Lee offered a similar assessment, noting that the well-oiled KMT election machinery should be able to generate enough votes to support its three candidates.

PFP: An Uphill Battle

16. (C) The PFP has renominated its incumbent, Chen Chien-Song. PFP County Director Wu Chih-Chou admitted that Chen faces an uphill battle. Their campaign has little money and almost no support from the central party. Chen, a former engineer with his base of support in his hometown of Shuilin, plans to run on his record of service. When asked what Chen's strategy for the campaign would be, Wu offered the example that "Chen attends many funerals in his district to grieve with his constituents." Wu lamented, however, that the PFP was being marginalized because many locals assume it is just a party for ethnic Mainlanders.

All Quiet on the Nantou Front

17. (C) Nantou County (pop. 539,721), a land-locked mountainous district located in Taiwan's geographic center, is represented in the LY with four seats. Eleven candidates registered for this year's election. However, in contrast to neighboring Yunlin County, Nantou's election looks to be rather predictable. In the last election the DPP took two seats and the KMT and PFP each took one. With three of the four incumbents running for reelection this time, no major changes are expected.

Pan-Blue: On the Defensive

18. (C) The Pan-Blue in Nantou has taken a defensive posture, nominating only their two incumbents, former Kaohsiung Mayor and nationally recognized politician Wu Dun-Yi (KMT) and Chen Chih-pin (PFP). The decision not to attempt to gain territory in Nantou was the result of an agreement between the KMT and PFP, according to KMT Nantou County Section Chief Tseng Ching-chen. Had the KMT nominated two candidates,

SIPDIS

explained Tseng, the second candidate would not stand a good chance of winning because of Wu's extreme popularity, and might squeeze out the PFP candidate by siphoning off some of his votes. Now the KMT can instead encourage some of its voters to support the PFP's Chen if polls indicate he is in danger of losing to a Green candidate, Tseng added. Lin Po-wen, who would have been the KMT's second candidate, was predictably upset. He camped in front of KMT headquarters protesting this decision until the October 12 deadline, at which point he registered as an independent. Tseng was dismissive of Lin's chances, explaining that in the internal party primary, Lin only received 4% of the votes, while Wu got 91%.

Pan-Green: Hoping for a PFP Split

19. (C) The DPP nominated one of their incumbents, Tang Huo-Sheng and a newcomer, Lin Yun-Sheng (the current Magistrate's son). The other DPP incumbent, Tsai Huang-lan, decided not to run for reelection because he is planning to run for Magistrate next year. The TSU has once again nominated Chen Tse-Chi, who lost in the previous election. With the three incumbents' seats widely considered unassailable, the only question seems to be whether the last seat will go to the DPP's Lin or the TSU's Chen. DPP County Chairwoman Lai Yen-Hsueh was more optimistic than outside observers about the Pan-Green's chances in Nantou, saying that former PFP Legislator and James Soong spokesperson Chen Chen-Sheng, who is running on the Nonpartisan Solidarity Union (NSU) nomination, might steal enough votes from the PFP's Chen Chih-Pin to make it possible for all three Green candidates to win.

Comment: Issues Take a Back Seat to Tactics, Personalities

10. (C) Predictions at this point are difficult to make. As PFP Yunlin Director Wu explained, early polls are unreliable because vote-buying becomes rampant in the last few weeks of the campaign. Although this region is notorious for having the most flagrant vote-buying in Taiwan, it is unclear how much of a factor this will be in December. However some things do seem clear. Because of the Pan-Blue's defensive nomination strategy in Nantou, it is very unlikely that the current 2:2 split will change. The situation in Yunlin is far more complex due to the Magistrate's disappearance in a bribery scandal, the aggressive nominations on both sides, and the number of independents taking part in the election. However, most observers agree that because the Pan-Blue has so many serious mavericks challenging its nominees, it will face a great disadvantage. Provided the more disciplined Pan-Green makes no big mistakes, they should have little problem maintaining the 3:3 split, and could very likely gain a seat in Yunlin, bringing them closer to their goal of a majority in the LY this December.

11. (C) As the very different election situations in these two counties illustrate, issues may play at best a secondary role in this December's LY election. Factors like the number of nominees and the presence of mavericks on either side largely determine the nature of the contest. Rather than national policy issues, factors like connections, personalities, media attention, money and tactical decisions like "peipiao" vote-distribution will likely decide the outcome. DPP Yunlin County Chairman Wang's answer to AIT's questions about campaign issues was atypical only in its succinctness: "Issues?!" he growled, "The issue is we have three candidates!"

PAAL